



ENVIRONAMICS

Environmental Consultants

BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT

Environmental Impact Assessment for the proposed solar facility located on the remaining extent of the Farm Vogelsrand No. 373 near Hennenman, Free State Province

1. Introduction

The activities entail the development of a photovoltaic solar facility and associated infrastructure on the remaining extent of Farm Vogelsrand No. 373, Registration Division Ventersburg, situated within the Mathjhabeng Local Municipality area of jurisdiction. The town of Hennenman is located approximately 4km southeast of the proposed development (refer to the attached locality map – Figure A).

The project entails the generation of up to 20MW electrical power through photovoltaic (PV) panels. The total footprint of the project will be approximately 53 hectares (including supporting infrastructure on site) that is located within the larger affected property. The property on which the facility is to be constructed will be leased by DPT Hennenman (Pty) Ltd from the property owner, for the lifespan of the project (minimum of 20 years).

The electricity generated by the facility will be wheeled into the grid for offtake by third parties. The purpose of this background information document (BID) is to provide interested and affected parties (I&APs) with:

- Information on the need for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).
- An overview of the proposed solar facility.
- An overview of the EIA process and specialist studies being conducted to identify the potential impacts associated with the proposed facility; and
- Details of how I&APs may become involved in the process, receive information, or raise issues, which may concern and/or interest them.

2. The need for an EIA

The EIA Regulations, 2014 (GN. R.326 as amended) published in terms of the National Environmental Management Act (Act No. 107 of 1998) determine that an environmental authorisation is required for certain listed activities, which might have detrimental impacts on the environment. The following activities have been identified with special reference to the proposed development and are listed in the EIA Regulations:

- Activity 11(i) (GN.R. 327): “The development of facilities or infrastructure for the transmission and distribution of electricity outside urban areas or industrial complexes with a capacity of more than 33 but less than 275 kilovolts.”
- Activity 28 (ii) (GN.R. 327): “Residential, mixed, retail, commercial, industrial or institutional developments where such land was used for agriculture or afforestation on or after 1998 and where such development (ii) will occur outside an urban area, where the total land to be developed is bigger than 1 hectare.”
- Activity 1 (GN.R. 325): “The development of facilities or infrastructure for the generation of electricity from a renewable resource where the electricity output is 20 megawatts or more...”
- Activity 15 (GN.R. 325): “The clearance of an area of 20 hectares or more of indigenous vegetation.”
- Activity 4 (b)(i)(ee)(gg) (GN.R. 324): “The development of a road wider than 4 meters with a reserve less than 13.5 meters (b) in the Free State, (i) outside urban areas, within (ee) Critical biodiversity areas..., and (gg) within 5km of any protected area...”
- Activity 12 (b) (i) (ii) (GN.R. 324): “The clearance of 300 square meters or more of indigenous vegetation (b) in the Free state, (i) within

critically endangered or endangered ecosystem, and (ii) within critical biodiversity areas”

Being listed under Listing Notice 1, 2 and 3 (GN.R. 327, 325 & 324) implies that the development is considered as potentially having a significant impact on the environment. Based on the activities triggered, the Application for Environmental Authorisation is subject to the completion of full Scoping and EIA (S&EIA) process as described in Regulations 21-23. The Scoping and EIA process involves the identification and assessment of environmental impacts through specialist studies, the recommendation of appropriate mitigation measures as well as public participation.

3. Project description

The activities entail the development of a photovoltaic solar facility and associated infrastructure. The key component of the proposed project is described below:

- PV Panel Array - To produce up to 20MW, the proposed facilities will require numerous linked cells placed behind a protective glass sheet to form a panel. Multiple panels will be required to form the solar PV arrays which will comprise the PV facility. The PV panels will be mounted to a single access tracking frame system
- Inverters - Sections of the PV array will be wired to inverters. The inverter is a pulse width mode inverter that converts direct current (DC) electricity to alternating current (AC) electricity at grid frequency.
- Connection to the grid - Connecting the array to the electrical grid requires transformation of the voltage from 800V to 33kV to 132kV. The normal components and dimensions of a distribution rated electrical substation will be required. Output voltage from the inverter is 800V and this is fed into step up transformers to 132kV. An onsite substation will be required on the site to step the voltage up to 132kV, after which the power will be evacuated into the national grid via the proposed 132kV power line. It is expected that generation from the facility will connect to the national grid via a loop-in loop-out connection into the existing Kroonstad-Everest 132kV Power Line. The proposed connection point into the national grid is located

within the remaining extent of Farm Vogelsrand No. 373.

- Supporting Infrastructure – The following auxiliary buildings with basic services including water and electricity will be required on the sites:
 - Office / Control Room (~300m²);
 - 22kV Switch gear and relay room (~200m²);
 - 22kV/132kV Outdoor Switchyard (5000m²);
 - Security control (~60m²)
- Battery storage – A Battery Storage Facility with BESS Containerized solution and associated operational, safety and control infrastructure will be required.
- Roads – Access will be obtained via the R70 regional road to the north of the site. An internal site road network will also be required to provide access to the solar field and associated infrastructure.
- Fencing - For health, safety and security reasons, the facility will be required to be fenced off from the surrounding farm. Fencing with a height of 2.5 meters will be used.

4. Specialist studies to be conducted

There are several environmental impacts, both positive and negative that are associated with the development and operation of a photovoltaic solar energy facilities. Specialist studies will be conducted to identify and assess these potential impacts. Specialist studies will be guided by existing information, field observations and input from the public participation process. For these projects, the following specialist studies have been identified as relevant:

- Heritage Impact Assessment (including archaeology and palaeontology)
- Ecological and Wetland Impact Assessment
- Visual Impact Assessment
- Soil, Land Capability and Agricultural Potential Study
- Geotechnical study
- Social Impact Assessment
- Avifaunal Impact Assessment
- Traffic Impact Assessment

5. The EIA process and timeline for the project

Public participation is an integral part of the EIA process and aims to involve Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs) in the process by notifying them of the proposed project and encouraging them to voice their issues and concerns.

The process undertaken will be transparent and allow I&APs to comment on the project or raise concerns, which will be included and considered in the respective Scoping and EIA Reports. Table 1 indicates the key steps of the EIA process and the timelines for the project.

Table 1: Key steps of the EIA process

Activity	Prescribed timeframe	Timeframe
Public participation (BID)	30 Days	2 June – 4 July 2022
Submit application form and Draft Scoping Report	-	July 2022
Public participation (Draft Scoping Report)	30 Days	July – Aug. 2022
Submit Final Scoping Report	44 Days	Aug 2022
Approval of Final Scoping Report	43 Days	Sept. 2022
Submit Draft EIA Report	106 Days	Oct. 2022
Public Participation	30 Days	Oct. – Nov. 2022
Submit Final EIA Report	-	Dec. 2022
Decision	107 Days	March 2023
Public participation (decision) & submission of appeals	20 Days	Apr. 2023

6. Your involvement

I&APs include individuals, communities or groups whose interest may be positively or negatively affected by the proposed development. You may get involved in the public participation process by:

- Registering as an I&AP.
- Submitting your issues, concerns and questions in writing to participation@environamics.co.za.
- Attending any public meetings which may be held during the course of the EIA process. As a registered I&AP you will automatically be invited to attend these meetings should it be relevant to the project.
- Reviewing and commenting on the reports within the stipulated public review periods.

7. Comments and queries

All comments and queries may be directed to the following contact person:

Contact person: Lisa Opperman / Christia van Dyk
Telephone: 084 920 311 / 078 470 5252 (Cell)
Electronic mail: participation@environamics.co.za